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ABSTRACT

The many issues confronting teacher evaluation can be consolidated into three general questions: (1) Who is responsible for evaluating teachers? (2) What evaluation instrument will be relevant and valid for the purposes intended? (3) What conditions are present when dealing with the human relation difficulties inherent in the evaluation process? The problems discussed represent general areas of dissonance in the field of teacher evaluation and are by no means inclusive of all concerns in this area. The purpose of the discussion is to introduce the reader to certain controversial issues and to specify how these issues affect the role of the principal. No attempt is made to provide "cookbook" answers to the issues raised, as none appear to exist. (Author/IRT)

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OSSC BULLETIN

TEACHER EVALUATION: THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

by

Greg R. Weisenstein

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PREFACE

Perhaps no other issue is of greater concern to principals than teacher evaluation, for teacher evaluation is one of the most time-consuming and demanding tasks the principal must perform. This Bulletin discusses the principal's role in teacher evaluation, offering suggestions for improving the evaluation process at the building level.

Principals should find this Bulletin particularly helpful as they implement evaluation programs. Central staff administrators and board members should find the Bulletin's analysis of the teacher evaluation issue enlightening.

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TEACHER EVALUATION: THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

Introduction and Purpose

Just as the pendulum swings from one position to the other, accountability in education has moved from a position of obscurity to its current position of foremost importance in the cluster of major educational issues. Campbell (1971, p. 177) suggests that "we seem to be making amends for the days when only students were accountable and the importance of motivation was overlooked." Groups within our society are now demanding that educators assume greater liability for providing quality education to their preadolescent and adolescent clientele, and in the process, account for their expenditures. Therefore, educators are being asked to be accountable for the education process in each classroom--on the local level by the school board and citizens; on the state level by the departments of education, professional organizations and the enactment of state legislation; and on the national level by professional organizations with the encouragement of the United States Office of Education.

However, an investigation of current research in the area of teacher evaluation provides little evidence that research of an empirical nature has been undertaken. Articles

of a descriptive or theoretical nature reveal a general dissonance which tends to penetrate thinking with regard to teacher evaluation, seemingly to be generated by the confusion which exists at the definitional and operational levels. Although most authorities agree that the process of accountability in education begins in the classroom by assessing the quality of instruction provided, opinion differs widely as to the purpose of evaluation, its goals, the criteria to be applied in the evaluation of effective instruction, who is to do the evaluating, and how it is to be done.

Jones (1972, p. 474) sees the current method of teacher evaluation as " . . . an ongoing tradition having little relationship to instructional improvement." He further suggests that neither the administrators who are doing the evaluating nor the teachers who are being evaluated give much credence to the current system of evaluation which he claims is suited only to build evidence of poor teaching and is not used as an instrument to improve instruction. Along the same note, McNeil (1971) makes implicit in his discussion of teacher appraisal and improvement the contention that present evaluative procedures are for the most part objectionable to supervisors and teachers alike.

Regardless of its current imperfections, teacher evaluation is basic to educational accountability and, unlike the 24-hour measles, it shows no signs of fading after a short

outbreak. Since there is increasing emphasis being placed on teacher evaluation, with it appearing to be cemented in the educational process, those educators who are on the accountability firing line, namely the principal, must work to reduce the negative consequences of the unanswered questions raised by issues in this area. The remainder of this paper surveys these issues on the position of school principal and the principal's role as quality overseer within his or her school.

The Principal's Role

The many issues confronting teacher evaluation can be basically consolidated into three general questions:

1. Who is responsible for evaluating teachers?
2. What evaluation instrument will be relevant and valid for the purposes intended?
3. What conditions are present when dealing with the human relation difficulties inherent in the evaluation process?

First, given consideration for variables to be discussed later, a decision must be reached regarding who will be responsible for carrying out the evaluation process. The range of individuals suggested in the literature for this purpose varies from the principal, who has sole responsibility for teacher evaluation, to students, who are requested to evaluate their respective teachers, with curriculum consultants,

department heads and teachers falling between these two extremes.

There is little question about the principal's obligation as chief school building administrator to account for and assure the quality of education in his or her school. Both tradition and the law have compelled the principal to assume at least a passive role in the evaluation process as monitor and consultant. Professional organizations (Kansas NEA, 1973), authorities in the field of teacher evaluation (Redfern, 1963 and 1972; McNeil, 1971), and authorities in educational administration (Campbell, et al., 1971) all concur that the principal must assume a leadership role in developing and implementing adequate teacher evaluation systems. Along the same line, an inspection of teacher evaluation systems completed by the NEA Research Division in 1963 and two later surveys by the same Division in the years 1968 and 1971 revealed that the usual approach to teacher evaluation is for the principal to periodically, although seldom regularly, fill out a check list-type form on which he or she indicates the degree to which a teacher possesses the characteristics and skills listed on the form (Steele, unpublished paper).

It would seem that this upsurge in the demand for accountability in education, and ultimately teacher evaluation as the key element in accountability, places the local school

principal in the unenviable position of being accountable for the very process of accountability. The principal can endeavor to perform this task in one of several ways, each requiring a different degree of direct involvement by the principal in the teacher evaluation process. The principal may elect to assume the position of evaluator with little or no input from his/her staff; he/she may participate as an essential member of an evaluation team, comprised of staff members and possibly students, acting together or separately; he/she may oversee teacher self evaluation, acting as a consultant in setting and evaluating performance targets; or he/she may delegate the responsibility to another staff member.

Selection of the appropriate mode of evaluation depends, for the most part, on several variables which require treatment far beyond the scope of this paper. However, a few of these variables which appear more critical will be examined. First, the goals of teacher evaluation within each school must be assessed, given consideration to the school's educational objectives. For example, Wiches (1973) suggests that the mode of evaluation selected for the purpose of teacher evaluation differs from the mode chosen for the purpose of teacher improvement. He recommends the self appraisal methods, with less direct principal involvement, as the most effective mode of evaluation, if the goal of evaluation is to improve the instruction in the classroom.

Other critical variables include: staff composition, requirements of the evaluation instrument, and the personality and professional background of the principal. Staff composition, as it affects the selection of a mode of teacher evaluation, must be weighed in terms of staff tenure, receptiveness toward evaluation, and the staff's commitment to professional improvement. As to the requirements of the evaluation instrument, they will be looked at later as, at this point, this seems to be a "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" type of argument, with the type of evaluation instrument chosen dictating the mode of evaluation or vice versa.

The principal needs to consider these variables, weighing the evidence that suggests the way and the degree to which he/she will involve himself/herself directly in the evaluation process. Having done this, the principal can either work to alter the present form of teacher evaluation or adapt a new mode of evaluation which is more consistent with his/her characteristics and those of the institution. If the principal elects to evaluate the teaching staff with little or no assistance from colleagues, he/she should be aware that unavoidable gaps in his/her professional background will limit the use of the evaluation instrument. The instrument itself may place demands on the principal that are beyond his/her immediate level of competency. No principal

can be so knowledgeable as to have sufficient background in all subject areas, nor completely free of personal bias which could affect judgment on academic, discipline or personal affairs. Most educators, including principals and teachers alike, differ considerably on the issue of what constitutes good teaching and consequently rate teaching effectiveness based on their concept of what the "good" teaching act entails.

For instance, the principal may be called upon to evaluate the educational appropriateness of instruction being given trainable mentally retarded secondary special education students. Educational intuition and perhaps assistance from a knowledgeable friend would allow him/her to assess personal variables and the appropriateness of instructional media, but it seems a fair assumption that if the principal's subject matter preparation lay in an area other than special education, he/she may be hard pressed to evaluate teaching effectiveness relative to legitimate educational goals for this group.

Some studies indicate that the principal may not be the obvious choice for the position of evaluator and claim that he/she is incapable of making consistently accurate teacher ratings. Wilson (1964) provides us with a study that has implications for this question. For his study, two groups of teachers were selected, one randomly and the other made up of

teachers who were chosen as being most effective by seniors with high scholastic achievement records. The teachers were then compared on eight different indices, the last being the principal's rating. The results showed that principals noted the least differences between the two groups and differed from the students in the choice of the most effective teachers. Wilson concluded that administrators may have unique ideas about what kind of teacher is most effective. Jones (1972, p. 474), in a review of literature in the area of teacher evaluation found evidence supportive of Wilson and suggests that " . . . an average secondary student can do a better rating job than supervisors."

Although these studies can easily be over-interpreted, their implications should be heeded. Kult (1973, p. 278) suggests that " . . . persons lacking in acceptable qualities but still evaluating invite scorn and demean his position and that of the instructor." This, of course, is not to say that principals are poor teacher evaluators. They are probably the best when consideration is given to what they have to work with. But, there are foreseeable drawbacks when the principal decides to go it alone.

The principal may choose to participate as an essential member of an evaluation team, consisting of department heads, curriculum consultants, teachers, or other staff members. This option has some advantages that are not present when the

principal elects to evaluate teachers alone. The most obvious advantage is the availability of additional evaluators who can draw from varied backgrounds to provide a broader base from which evaluation is made. Pulley (1972) states that the subject matter consultant plays a key role in the evaluation process because of his knowledge of a particular field.

There are also disadvantages inherent in this system. Another view expressed by Pulley (1972) suggests that the relationship between the teacher and the curriculum consultant could be eroded if the consultant both advises and evaluates the teacher. A similar conflict develops if the department head acts in the capacity of evaluator as well as advisor. Therefore, these individuals, and to a certain extent the principal, share a paradoxical role of becoming both "angelic and demonic." In addition, numerous difficulties may develop when two or more individuals are assigned supervisory responsibilities for identical groups (e.g., the principal and director of special education suggest incompatible instructional changes based on their evaluation of the special education teacher).

Another option available to the principal is that he/she act as an overseer of teacher self-evaluation, serving as a consultant in setting and evaluating performance targets. Here again the principal is caught in the same paradoxical

role. However, this role is less threatening to teachers since, in most cases, the principal is assisting them in the process of self-evaluation and ultimately self-improvement. A necessary precondition for this system to function effectively is that staff members actually desire improvement professionally and will work toward those ends.

If the goal of evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the teacher, then this option is probably the least desirable. However, if teacher improvement is the goal, it may be the most desirable choice. Regardless of its desirability, this option is dependent on the principal's having the capacity to act as both an educational consultant and an evaluator. If either of these skills is lacking, the principal would do best to select an alternative mode of teacher evaluation.

The last option available to the principal is to delegate the responsibility of evaluation to another staff member, usually a vice principal. This seems to be the least desirable alternative since periodic evaluation provides the principal an opportunity to keep in touch with the various elements of the overall program. Understandably, the press of school affairs could require the principal to delegate a portion of his/her evaluation responsibility, but this should be limited since involvement in the evaluation process, whether active or passive, is critical to the growth and improvement of instruction within the school.

Selection of Evaluation Instrument

Upon reaching a decision regarding who will be responsible for carrying out the evaluation process, the second major question to be answered is what evaluation instrument will be relevant and valid for the purposes intended.

Since the principal must assume the greater share of responsibility for assuring within the staff a high level of professional excellence, he/she must develop a "game plan" to fulfill this responsibility. Two choices are open. He/she may decide to use existing, more traditional evaluation instruments, or to innovate, creating an evaluation instrument more acceptable to both principal and staff. If the principal chooses the first alternative, he/she and the staff must select an evaluation instrument that most closely represents the professional values of the staff and that will most effectively measure what it is intended to measure.

Therefore, the first step in selecting an evaluation instrument is to decide what the instrument is intended to measure. Ostensibly the "what" reduces to an issue of product versus process--are you going to measure the mechanism for providing "good" instruction or the outcome of "good" instruction? Redfern (1963, p. 8) discusses the problem from a slightly different perspective. He states:

> Is it the teacher or his performance that should be appraised? Experience shows that a satisfactory answer to this question is not always found before

> appraisal is undertaken. This accounts for confusion, if not for obstacles, in obtaining gratifying and lasting results. There is considerable experience to support the view that the valid appraisal of the teacher, as a person, is most difficult. It is one of the reasons for much of the distaste which teachers often express for the process itself.

Kult (1973) suggests that due to pressures from teachers most systems have done away with the more subjective evaluation types (e.g., "appearance and cleanliness," "order of the room,") and replaced them with watered-down versions that make the teacher feel better and relieve the administrator's anxiety.

On the basis of these and other arguments the wise principal would most likely avoid an evaluation instrument which deals with personal variables not affecting instruction. The decision to evaluate the teaching process or the product is not an easy task for the principal and staff. A short discussion of both product and process as they pertain to teacher evaluation follows.

If the instrument chosen deals with the process of "good" teaching, then it is important that the instrument specify what the teacher does in the process of teaching--or, more specifically, what he/she does to provide effective instruction to the student clientele. In other words, if process is being measured, the evaluation instrument must provide the set of criteria to be applied in determining whether certain phases of the teaching act are in fact good or bad instruction. Although most traditional teacher evaluation instruments

evaluate the teaching process, there is a lack of consensus as to what constitutes "good" teaching and subsequently what criteria are applied in determining "good" teaching. As early as 1927 Avent (1931) reports a contest among educators to determine attitudes and traits of excellent teachers. As a result of the contest, 1,513 different items were produced, all of them purported to be characteristic of excellent teaching. More recently, the American Association of School Administrators, the NEA and the National School Board Association (1961, p. 57), on the basis of a comprehensive review of literature dealing with teacher effectiveness, stated that "the notion of the 'good teacher' so basic to the study of teacher effectiveness turns out to be almost as vague and diffuse as the range of human experience relative to teaching." Apparently this mystification associated with the act of teaching has not decreased significantly in the last decade. As Bolen (1973, p. 20) points out the " . . . criterions for evaluating teacher behavior are sorely needed" and suggests that educators seem not know what to evaluate.

What significance does this have for the instrument that is used to evaluate the teaching process? In brief, a great deal of significance, plus several implications for principals who are using the instrument that measures process. When measuring process we have no guarantee that we are measuring what we want to measure (i.e., effectiveness of

of instruction). With some question as to the relevance and validity of the evaluation instrument being used, it is imperative that principals and their staffs be in agreement as to what and why certain aspects of teaching performance are measured. Principals must keep in mind that the day will come, and probably quickly, when they will have to defend their methods of accountability to their supervisors, the school board, parents, students, and to the teachers themselves. Therefore, principals must be capable of justifying each element of their evaluation instrument as having a direct purpose in their plan to insure and upgrade the level of quality of instruction within their schools.

If principals elect to evaluate the product of the teaching process rather than the process itself, they will have, for the most part, chosen their second option; that is, to innovate. Few teacher evaluation instruments deal directly with measurable changes in student behavior and fewer yet attempt to attribute these changes to the teaching process. Hence, principals who desire this type of evaluation will almost entirely be shooting in the dark with little precedence or research to act as guiding lights.

This is unfortunate, because the student product of the educational process is ultimately the main area for which we must demonstrate concern. Except for the extreme innovations and experiments in education, it seems safe to assume that communities should be more concerned about what and how much

their youngsters are learning rather than how they are learning it. It would then appear that since the act of "good" teaching is such an elusive concept, evaluation of the student product would yield more valid data regarding instructional ability and would be more readily interpretable to lay persons.

The relevance and validity of the chosen evaluation instrument also hinges on its being consistent with the more specific purposes of evaluation. Bolton (1973) identifies these purposes as follows:

1. improve instruction
2. reward superior performance
3. supply information for modifying assignment
4. protect both the individual and the school system from incompetence
5. validate the selection process
6. provide a basis for teacher's career planning
7. facilitate self-evaluation

A brief inspection of Bolton's list should suggest to the careful reader that the principal is not going to be able to correspond with all of these purposes by using either the product or process evaluation alone.

A basic problem common to both the product and the process approaches is the invalid assumption that you can determine a causal relationship between the teaching act and resultant behavioral changes observed in students, using

evaluation instruments currently in the field. Although this problem raises difficulties in making product-process decisions, there are other considerations in selecting an appropriate evaluation instrument. They include: clarity of items evaluated, so as to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding; items which elicit objective responses from the evaluator, thus avoiding the subjectivity to which most teacher criticism addresses itself; and ease of implementation, including data collection and interpretation. Possibly one of the most important considerations is the degree of staff input in the selection of the teacher evaluation instrument. The staff and the principal must be in agreement regarding all elements within the instrument, how it is to be used and for what purpose it is to be used.

In summation, the Kansas NEA (1973, p. 6) suggests the following five characteristics that schools should consider when identifying the adequacy of evaluation instruments:

1. Relevance--the extent to which the instrument measures a factor that is considered important.

2. Reliability and Objectivity--the consistency or reproducibility of the measure, i.e., whether the instrument maintains its stability from one application to the next.

3. Validity--whether the instrument measures the behavior, the object, or the event it was intended to measure.

4. Fidelity--the degree to which the response to the instrument parallels the true or actual performance.

5. Ease of Administration--the practicality of the instrument in the evaluation, i.e., its availability, scoring ease, etc.

Human Relation Difficulties

The final issue to be considered is dealing with the human relation difficulties inherent in the evaluation process. Included among these difficulties are the tensions that develop between the evaluator and evaluatee when the rated performance is poor; stifled creativity of the teacher who is trying to respond to the evaluation criteria as a means of acquiring a more positive rating; lack of response to assistance made by the principal to the teacher resulting from the evaluation; and the threat of termination or transfer in order to improve instruction (Kansas NEA, 1973).

Because the act of evaluation is threatening to teachers, Pulley (1972) suggests that principals must possess a high degree of expertise in human relations skills. Redfern (1963, p. 8) states that "the difficulty of appraising the teacher is intensified when there are more weaknesses than strengths, for it requires a great deal of emotional maturity on the part of the teacher and consummate skill by the appraiser in making sound judgments." Consequently, it should not be too difficult to find administrators who, because of the threat of negative personal encounters with members of their staff, especially those who are forceful upon

confrontation, and because of the inability to defend their evaluation due to the inadequacy of their evaluation instruments, choose to either treat the evaluation process lightly or rate instruction in a more positive light than is actually warranted.

Therefore, the question is raised as to how the principal reduces the tensions produced by the evaluation situation, while at the same time not retreating from his/her position as evaluator. In at least partially answering this question, the principal can avoid many problems in this area by assuring that evaluation planning has been extensive enough so as to allow participation by staff members at all levels and to assure that the plan for evaluation is straightforward, being understood by each staff member. The principal must assure that the evaluation instrument used generates data free from bias and misinterpretation; that the evaluation process is carried out in a friendly atmosphere in which personalities and assignments are considered, and professional improvement is emphasized; that the evaluator is to the point and honest, relating to the evaluatee both strong and weak areas and giving the evaluatee ample opportunity to appraise his/her own performance; that resources for change are provided if change is recommended; and that the degree and direction of change be determined jointly by the evaluator and evaluatee.

Summary

The problems discussed here represent general areas of dissonance in the field of teacher evaluation and are by no means inclusive of all concerns in this area. The purpose of this discussion has been merely to introduce the reader to certain controversial issues in teacher evaluation and specify how these issues affect the role of the principal. No attempt was made to provide "cookbook" answers to the issues raised, as none appear to exist.

A review of the literature in teacher evaluation revealed little evidence that agreement exists among the professionals in education as to the key elements in the teacher evaluation process. Major issues generated by the teacher evaluation process were grouped into three very general categories and were felt to be characteristic of the dissonance affecting decisions relative to the process of accountability in education. In dealing with the first question, "Who is responsible for evaluating teachers?" it was suggested that the principal must play at least a passive role in the evaluation of the teaching staff, and that the degree of the principal's direct involvement in the evaluation process varies considerably. The wisdom of the principal who assumes complete responsibility for the evaluation process was questioned, with alternate plans provided which enable the principal to share responsibility in this area. Basic criteria to be applied

in the selection of the evaluation modes identified are also provided.

The second major question dealt with the identification and selection of an appropriate evaluation instrument. Considerations in this selection included the following: relevance, reliability, validity, fidelity, and ease of administration. In addition, the purposes of teacher evaluation, as a prerequisite to the identification and selection of an evaluation instrument, was surveyed, with primary emphasis given to the pros and cons of evaluating either the instructional process or the instructional product.

The third major question pertained to the human relations difficulties which could arise as a result of the evaluation process. Characteristic human relations problems were identified and a non-inclusive list of preventive measures available to the principal was given. In conclusion, it was implied that, regardless of the frailties of current evaluation systems, a great deal of success in teacher evaluation can be achieved through adequate planning, staff involvement, and emphasis being placed on professional growth rather than teacher incompetence.

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